



Problem Solver

'How can I utilise my internal talent pool to fill a recently vacated senior position?'



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If you haven't done the things below, it is too late. You risk failure of the business model (dissatisfied customers go elsewhere) or of governance (with reputation consequences). The real solution is to have previously captured the intelligence and insight that high talent has and to have replicated it elsewhere (i.e. designing your talent system along the principles of "distributed capability systems"). Paint two pictures in your mind: military teams that lose communication in the fog of war, or see an officer go down but have self-correcting mechanisms; or research units that recruit the highest technical talent, but make sure that if the individual goes under a bus, not all investment in knowledge is lost! What should have happened to mitigate the risks?

First put in systems and processes to understand and capture the capabilities (the intelligence, organisational memory, and strategies and networks mobilised to exploit that intelligence) that made the previous incumbent "talented". Second put in place the distribution systems. Work out your plan for how you will do this not for the roles, but for the individuals.

So, short-term, map the social networks that high talent uses to execute strategy, assess others against the strength of their social capital, and set development tasks to put successors in front of the network. Set up arrangements to capture the unique contacts and insights of the original talent. Longer-term, performance-manage high talent in ways that ensure they coach internal successors and build rewards for those who build up skills of collective dialogue, organisational inquiry, and strategic conversation in their teams.

What does the internal talent really need to know?

- *What did original talent believe to be the sources of knowledge that make for skilled performance?*
- *What were their insights about the strengths and limitations of unit expertise, resources, and where expertise lies?*

Of course, if you did this, key talent would not be able to command such high salaries, so do it by stealth!