

Shanelle Moloney

AS THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AT COVER-MORE TALENT MANAGEMENT AND RECOGNISING LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL ARE AT THE FOREFRONT OF SHANELLE MOLONEY'S ROLE.

Tell us about the talent management program at Cover-More. How are you nurturing and developing talent?

I think there are three things about Cover-More that are underpinning the criticality of best-practice talent management. Firstly, Cover-More is growing significantly, in Australia and globally. We now have 1000 employees in our global travel insurance and assistance group with our expansion into India this year. This is more than double the size of our headcount from this time last year.

Secondly, we are very fortunate to have a group CEO, Peter Edwards, who innately understands that people create success – having the right people in the right roles who share the same vision for growth and operational excellence. I have worked with Peter for about 10 years and he has always championed strategic HR and talent management and has ensured there was a voice at the boardroom table for our discipline.

Thirdly, we are also fortunate to have a depth of talent and a group of people who are committed to our company's global growth ambitions.

We introduced our talent management program earlier this year with the support of our entire senior leadership team. This is a multi-faceted program, with specific measurement and assessment tools, which pushes talent management deep into the organisation by devolving responsibility for the program to our managers. However, the documented process of implementation ensures we have consistency and an outcomes focus in talent management.

How crucial are talent management and succession planning these days?

Can any organisation truly succeed without effective talent management and succession planning? I doubt it. People push organisations forward. If you look inside any very successful organisation, you invariably find three things – exceptional executive leadership, a shared vision and a team of committed and motivated individuals who are good at what they do and enjoy doing it. Those things don't happen by chance. There will be a highly effective talent management culture and infrastructure underpinning it all.



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How do you recognise leadership potential and develop leaders at all levels?

You need agreed principles, a formal talent management process and a senior leadership team that is committed for the long term.

We employ an evidence-based system that allows transparency over the capability and potential of leaders within the business and how best to develop this through the use of tools, frameworks and development plans. It's a holistic process that incorporates an assessment of talent and future development needs by management and the individual. We have several key pillars to our process: agreed and documented leadership competencies; defined management levels; performance review; talent assessment and succession planning; executive development; and talent discussion.

You also need a pervasive understanding that no two talented people are the same. It's not surprising that those organisations that are good at attracting and retaining talent

embrace the philosophy that there is no option but for the business of today to customise their approach to talent and subsequent talent management.

How has the role of HR evolved during your 10 years in the industry?

Many young people who join high-functioning HR teams today are surprised to learn that HR was once considered just a recruitment and administration function, a 'personnel department'. Times have certainly changed. I think today human capital is considered as important, if not more so, than any other element of a high-performing organisation. I like to tell the story of a lecturer who, in the first year of my degree, commenced his first lecture by saying: "If you people think you're going to get a job and career in HR, you're kidding yourself. Businesses don't believe in this yet." I think we may have proved him wrong. HR is a strategic heavy-hitter today.

You've held senior HR roles in fashion, food and childcare organisations. How have you tailored your methods for each?

I have always believed that HR has a natural place at the core of any business – that it is the responsibility of HR practitioners to be commercially oriented, to speak the language of the business and to function and behave like any other part of the organisation. Of course, every business is different but I believe that the central elements of HR transcend industry sectors. From day one of my career, I have sought to be accepted, and have HR accepted, on the commercial outcomes and the ROI that can be delivered by effective HR strategies and execution.

Although my roles have become more mature and more advanced, the fundamentals remain the same. You must win the support of your senior leadership team by demonstrating the evidence base of our discipline – the people metrics, how and why they are measured, how effective HR strategy flows from the overall business strategy and how its impact and return can be evaluated. We have a new positioning statement that we developed in the past 12 months: "We focus on what matters." It's a way of thinking that works on so many levels, not least with HR. To me, it's a simple line that distils the essence of how any discipline can be effective in a competitive, commercial environment. **HRm**