

Why skills shortages are self-inflicted

According to CIPD research, a whopping 78% of employers had problems retaining employees in 2007. **78%!!!**

It is widely acknowledged that employees don't leave companies, they leave managers. So these figures tell us that **78% of employers have poor managers, who create retention problems and cost their businesses money.**

It's not surprising to note from the same report that **84%** of employers also had problems recruiting in 2007. Why isn't this a surprise? Because there's a vicious circle at work here, based on flawed traditions and process.

Struggle to recruit = recruit someone who's not right for the job = they don't work out = they leave = labour turnover increases = struggle to replace

It seems to me that everyone's looking in the wrong place!

You know that when you go out to recruit a new member of staff, you want **someone who will deliver results**. That's the only thing that matters, that they get results. The detail of what those results are will obviously vary from job to job, but whatever they are, results are the only thing that count in ANY job.

Traditional recruitment processes are incapable of consistently identifying the people who will deliver results. A cv tells you nothing useful, job experience is meaningless. Who cares what someone did in the past? It's what they'll do in this *specific* job, in your *specific* culture, with your *specific* management now and in the future that counts.

So, here's the pearl of wisdom that sums up why tradition is illogical.

Experience is irrelevant. Skills are irrelevant. The only thing that is relevant is ability.

Why do employers insist on promoting great chefs, waiters, housekeepers, receptionists and so on to be supervisors and managers, just because they were great at what they did before? Recently, I worked with a client, a superb technical specialist in his field. He'd just been promoted to the top level role in his organisation and was miserable. Why? Because now he had to manage people, deal with politics, and (the real kick in the teeth) employ *other people* to do the stuff he loved! He didn't go into his field to manage people (he hated managing people!), yet that's what he'd ended up doing, because he was respected for his ability in his job. The company didn't want to lose him so they promoted him to show him how much they respected and appreciated him. In

doing so, they are undoubtedly at greater risk of losing him and probably the rest of his new team too, if he can't get to grips with managing and motivating them.

I've worked with plenty of other people in this exact same situation. On a couple of times, I've been brought in to help a company to exit them. Exactly whose fault is it when the superb Assistant Manager becomes a poor General Manager?

The fundamental flaw is that traditionally, we learn that the "career ladder" moves up into management. WHY? Management is a completely different skill set, a completely different job and more often than not, absolutely nothing at all to do with the career specialism that the person chose.

A traditional career ladder like this devalues crucial jobs that are shown at the "bottom of the ladder". Jobs without which organisations would fall apart. And it devalues management jobs, by not focusing on the true talents and abilities required to be a great manager. It's a job that you just get to when you've been around for a while.

Until UKplc can get its collective head around this conundrum and stop promoting those with industry / technical experience rather than specific management talent into management roles (and by the same token ignoring potentially superb managers who DO have the talent but don't have experience), we will continue to see employers struggling with recruitment and retention. AND complaints of skills shortages. AND the ongoing problem of low UKplc productivity will never go away.

Next month... *if we're ditching the traditional career ladder, how do we motivate and retain talented, ambitious employees?*