
Case Study:

Talent Strategies for the Rest of Us



By Tammy Munson and April Rivkin

The Challenge

The road to a talent strategy often begins with chronic pain. Employee engagement symptoms don't appear overnight, and by the time they surface, the underlying issues can be deeply embedded in an organization's culture and practices.

While this may not seem like an auspicious beginning for a talent initiative, it's a common reality. Treating a talent strategy as a journey with employee engagement at the center will increase your odds of success.

Read on for a story of a telecom carrier with an urgent need to reduce employee turnover for frontline sales.

Understand Your Starting Point

“Our sales organization is bleeding people—and we’ve got to stop it now.”

Our client was experiencing high turnover in frontline sales. As a result, they spent considerable time and effort recruiting backfill positions and regularly missed sales quotas. These outcomes produced immediate and visible pain in the organization, leading to a desire for a quick fix.

While it's tempting to focus a talent strategy around obvious pain points, such as attrition, a disciplined look at current state will build a case for change, and prevent a rush to judgment or incomplete solutions.

This is a great opportunity to leverage your greatest asset—your employees. Viewing your employees as customers and seeking their feedback will produce

great insights that lead to culturally relevant solutions.

We interviewed employees from each of the key sales functions, and discovered that attrition was closely linked to poor onboarding practices that left many new employees without the basic skills and information to succeed. We also found large variations between sales channels and a missed opportunity to leverage best practices.

Create a Path That You Can Follow

“We have to focus on the highest impact efforts. We don’t have time to boil the ocean.”

If you have taken a close look at your current state, you likely have a laundry list of improvement opportunities and potential solutions that can seem unmanageable. This reinforces the importance of the second stage of the journey: developing, prioritizing and

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sequencing solutions into a road map. We worked with our client to rate their initial list of solutions by two criteria: level of expected impact and level of effort. We then selected a mix of high- and low-effort solutions.

Our resulting talent strategy addressed 21 solutions over a three-phased road map. Each phase included a “big ticket” item, such as revamping the onboarding program, and a mix of smaller activities that our client could execute within 90 days, such as a quick reference guide to career paths.

Get it to the Front Lines

“We have an all hands meeting next week. What can we get in front of our employees to get them excited?”

Our client was anxious to move to the final phase of a talent strategy journey: delivering the talent strategy to your employees. Organizations often struggle with this phase because it can be challenging to describe a talent strategy in a way that engages and excites employees. Here are some tactics to get your talent strategy to the front lines:

- **Create champions** – early adopters who try it out, provide feedback and create “buzz” around the solutions.

- **Conduct campaigns** – or contests to encourage employees to try out a solution.
- **Communicate** – use a communication plan to keep your leadership and managers on message and to reinforce new material or programs.

Our client launched a series of quick wins to engage employees in their talent strategy. Leaders announced progress at every all hands meeting and showcased a solution. This kept the team continually focused on the talent strategy from the employees’ point of view.

The Bottom Line

Launching a talent strategy can begin as an exercise in reducing pain, but it doesn’t have to define your initiative. Treating your talent strategy as a journey will help you to understand current state, develop achievable solutions, and deliver those solutions to the front lines.

Above all, don’t forget your best traveling companions. Including your employees in the journey will increase the odds of success while producing solutions that you may never have imagined on your own.

Find out how Point B can help you achieve your vision. Visit pointb.com or contact us at insights@pointb.com.