



Career Management Column as published in Leadership and Management Books, L&MB - [Rita Balian Allen](#), Author of *Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself*

"Best Practices for Strategic Talent Development"

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February 2017

Effective career management practices are essential for organizations to remain relevant and competitive in our global marketplace. The selection of appropriate initiatives to yield the best results will differ from organization to organization. There is no one-size-fits-all program or combination of specific practices that will work for every company. The ideal model that is best-suited for each environment depends on their ***due diligence process*** that identifies the company's mission, values, competitive posture, culture, goals and business strategy. This sets the foundational philosophy and direction that will determine the need to best leverage choices.

Every organization has the ability to develop, implement and manage talent management initiatives that are aligned with their organizational culture and linked to their business strategy, goals and leadership style. Conducting this due diligence process by the senior management team enables the selection of the specific practices ideal for your company. The next important step is to assess your talent to identify existing competencies, skills, knowledge and abilities against those needed to achieve company goals. Are there any gaps and how will you address those gaps? After the talent assessment is concluded, investigating and selecting appropriate career management initiatives that will leverage existing competencies as well as address the gaps will allow your organization to build for the future. Another key component of creating these initiatives, is to ensure they are well publicized, marketed and communicated throughout your organization along with an efficient administrative process that ensures credibility and reliability of its purpose.

There are a wide range of ***talent management practices*** that a company can choose to develop to ensure competitive advantage based on their due diligence process. Here is a ***three-tier approach*** that offers several options:

Tier One - Planning

- Creating Competency Models and Performance Criteria - well defined criteria that can be measured and evaluated regularly, providing solid basis for accountability, identifying required competencies as well as potential gaps to be addressed
- Career Development and Career Planning - proactive programs for employee growth and progression for short and long term career satisfaction and success
- Career Pathing - established career paths and families of jobs offering opportunity with clearly defined criteria to achieve each level
- Employee Development - invest in development of existing skill-sets as well as those needed for employees to master relevant skills and organization to be successful
- Learning and Development Initiatives - commitment to on-going efforts of identifying and assessing organizational needs, designing and delivering required programs with constant evaluation and enhancement to retain talent and stay ahead of the competition, most essential here is support from the CEO cascading throughout the organization
- Succession Planning - tapping into your talent, planning a future for them as well as the organization; identify high potential talent, staff with critical skill sets, assessment of current leadership and determining succession appropriately and proactively

Tier Two - Development

- Management and Executive Coaching - investing in individual coaching for valued managers and executives to further enhance and build strong leadership capabilities
- Mentors and Advisors - build a team of mentors and advisors throughout organization and pair them with key performers; encourage both internal and external mentoring and relationship building that enhances trust, loyalty and collaboration
- Performance Management and Feedback - consistent and regular feedback with a focus on development, accountability and results; recognition, value, and open dialogue for growth
- Competitive Reward Systems - determining organization's philosophy and position reward systems, compensation, pay programs and practices accordingly

- Career Centers - develop and offer internal and/or external career planning resources accessible to all employees with support from management
- Cross-Functional Development Programs - enrich internal skills and knowledge through cross-functional development options for mobility through various lines of business

Tier Three - Engagement

- Diversity and Inclusion - embody a culture that models and embraces the benefits of differences within the workforce with intention in all practices to achieve greatest value
- Best Practices - gain competitive advantage by identifying and building best people practices and business practices that are necessary to be a leader in your industry and beyond
- On-going Talent Assessment - continuously assess existing talent, necessary skills and competencies; identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and immediate solutions
- Rotational Programs - rotate staff through various functions in many roles within specific timeframes cultivating well-trained, well-developed, unique depth of company knowledge
- Flexible Work Arrangements/Work-Life Integration - offer and advocate for flexible work schedules with a focus on results; recognize it as a competitive business strategy
- Knowledge Management - formal and directed process of determining what information contained within organization could benefit all and creating ways to make it accessible
- Networking Opportunities - train staff on networking, encourage and allow opportunities for building relationships across organization as well as externally within industry and community

The ever-changing workforce of today has created the need for organizations to be proactive and consistently engaging in talent management practices that recognize their human capital as their greatest asset and therefore, their greatest competitive advantage. As our demographics continue to evolve and technology continues to change, practices of today may not meet the demands of tomorrow. Staying ahead of this curve and consistently assessing and initiating appropriate talent management practices will make all the difference to yield the best results for all.

Rita Balian Allen is the president of Rita B. Allen Associates, a national career management firm specializing in executive coaching, leadership development, management training and career development. She is a lecturer at Boston-area universities, a sought-after speaker and presenter, the author of numerous articles, blogs and the book, *"Personal Branding and Marketing Yourself: The Three Ps Marketing Technique as a Guide to Career Empowerment"*. Rita was voted one of the top ten executive coaches by the Boston Women's Business Journal.