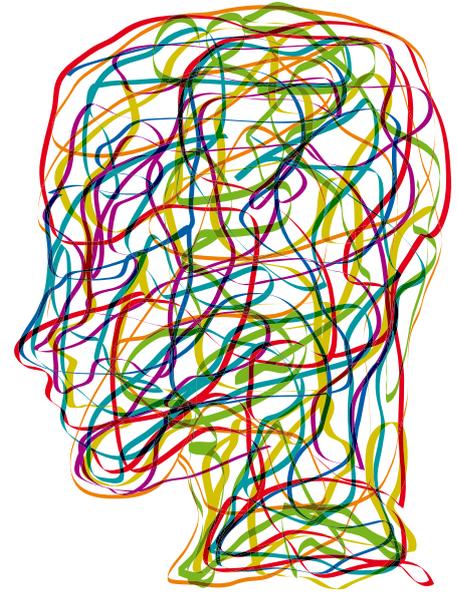


5 Ways Agile Companies Leveraging Agile Talent Have Become Global Innovation Leaders.



If we have learned anything from the continuous line of sociopolitical and economic shocks facing all organisations, it's how to do more with less. The ability to respond effectively in a highly dynamic climate is now a core organisation competency, one that marks out the great firms. "Agile" companies use agile methodologies in several aspects of their business to address the partially unexpected. What might appear simply as a "response in the now" to whatever challenge arises, is in fact careful deployment of pre-planned contingencies.

Volvo, the Swedish automotive manufacturer, moved from box-shaped utility cars with an emphasis on safety, to contemporary upmarket vehicles with an emphasis on innovative technology. By 2019 all their engines will be either fully electric or hybrid. This transformation occurred after the acquisition of the company by Chinese automotive manufacturer Geely. Their approach has been to release its best talent on its products and develop agile business methods, including the deployment of talent. Bold organisations deliver on their visions by adapting and reforming as customer appetite and world changes demand. Engaging agile talent and smart resourcing is central to this. The deployment of agile contractor and interim executives delivers high impact, high-end results for "refill" (cover for absent professionals) or "refocus" (additional talent needs arising from change) needs.

Knowing how, when and why to leverage agile talent is key to value. Build agility into your business planning by developing 'what if?' scenario plans. The agile companies with whom we work, ask five questions during their planning process and review those answers regularly for their continued fitness and accuracy:

1. What does the ideal resource mix look like? Many factors feed into this. Ultimately, smart businesses avoid being held to ransom by narrow talent supply channels or unnecessary long-term cost commitments through agility. Superior resource models build maximum flexibility, actual needs and bench back up.

2. What are the specialist skills you require, when and for how long? Firms with strong talent management processes consistently evaluate the stretch potential of current talent for future roles. However, short-term assignments often require immediate resolution with a particular experience and skill set. Contract and interim talent can provide this solution as well as a potential shadowing opportunity for current employees.

3. What projects are NOT on the horizon? Much of an organisation's planned change activity is project based so the deployment of professional contractors for a fixed period or purpose makes obvious sense. Agile organisations consider what other scenarios might arise as unintended consequences or unseen opportunities and how might talent be provided to deliver on these?

4. What is your contractor management process? Agility is best achieved through the three O's of flexible talent: Onboarding, Oversight and Offboarding. Set out in writing clear delivery expectations (for refill or refocus assignments) at the beginning of every assignment, iron out wrinkles at this point. Have regular feedback sessions, drawing where possible on the contractor's prior experience to add additional value. Ensure a permanent employee is appointed to track all documentation and work product and that the contractor is not leaving any gaps when they complete the assignment.

5. Do we integrate contractors into our culture? For firms new to contracting, one of the most common concerns around the use of agile professionals is how this will assimilate with or intergate into the existing environment. Like most things, the devil is in the detail. In some cases, you may require your contractor or interim talent to stand back and objectively analyse current failing functions or processes.

In most other cases integration is advised, the more a contractor understands the formal and informal elements to your firm, the faster they can contribute. Manage the communication with all key stakeholders carefully, outlining what you expect to achieve because of the investment and which role, if any, stakeholders will play in achieving this alongside the agile talent.

Agility delivers commercial advantage because it demands genuine planning, creates effective business processes and is difficult for competitors to copy. The concept of building innovative processes into human capital planning has been with us for years. It is no coincidence that the firms who have been most disruptive in the last ten years are technology-based and that software and engineering professionals represent the most mature contractor talent markets. The same might be said for the biopharmaceutical sector and the exponential growth in the use of Life Science Contractors.

Real agility in talent resource planning is much broader and applies also to HR, Finance, Supply Chain and arketing – all functions in which organisations are having to innovate purposefully to stay relevant, not just to stay ahead.

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