



THE END OF THE ROAD FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT PATHS

Most research of professional talent, highlights their switch from being about career development to being about growth in professional experience. The definition of “experience” here is not ‘new tools for my toolbox’, but ‘new tests and challenges for me to overcome’. Personal growth not just a bigger job.

We know for example from our own research, that professionals in science and technology are drawn to firms based on their products, pipelines or technology. Some of our ‘health industries’ clients bring this further by highlighting the benefits of their products to end users, when attracting talent. And it works, the experience now becomes purpose. It applies also in our Corporate and Professional Services Practice, where we see HR executives drawn to firms tackling tough business challenges through transformation and key HR strategies. Invaluable, challenging experiences, exciting portfolios being built.

We have all seen future of work presentations and articles on what the new skills landscape will look like. But it seems just conjecture centred

around what technology will be like in the future. Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Internet Based Services and Robotics. While these are important, little seems to be understood about the actual work content professionals will undertake. A fact we can acknowledge is that skills are becoming obsolete more quickly. This is what drives the best professional talent to continuously build portfolios of experience rather than hang around for traditional staircase career development.

At the same time, pressure grows on firms to adopt agile approaches to aspects of their businesses. Leaders in such firms develop ambitious vision but do not get bogged down in the detail or resourcing. They allow agile teams figure these out, drawing on expertise as needed. This is done on an incremental, rather than total programme basis. For firms not adopting agile work models, flexible resourcing is still an essential initiative as HR drives performance through strong talent management strategies.

The point at which these two forces intersect is driving the inexorable rise

in professional contracting and interim management. Talent builds experiences while organisations have expertise on site as needed, cost gone when not. Ultimately, both parties move on to the next challenge, adopting and adapting as needed.

While contractors carry a surface premium, they rarely work out more expensive than similar permanent employees. Build in the added value of contractors having experienced best practice and similar challenges elsewhere and cost ceases to concern.

However, the key to leveraging flexible expertise, is in not treating contractors as some form of temporary hire or solution. This is an entirely different platform of resource management so firstly make sure all stakeholders are completely bought in. Its important to adapt your hiring and onboarding process to meet this different need. Ensure you have really good on-assignment and of-boarding documentation to capture all the value and set hard measures to assess progress towards the goal and not just the achievement of an end result. **Maybe this really is the future of work.**