

Redescribe the challenge

In addition to death and taxes, there is one other certainty in life: Human capital is a source of strategic capability. Having the right talent is the checkbox toward the successful achievement of strategy. Not having the right talent makes your growth plans sputter and pop — to the tune of \$24 billion in Ontario alone, according to the Conference Board of Canada.



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ORGANIZATIONAL
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And so, jobs sit vacant — yet we live in a time of seven per cent unemployment. Clearly, there is a pressing, specialized demand seeking a missing, specialized supply. Hence, the skills gap. What are we to do about that? And are we the source of the problem?

The theme that emerged from the “Jobs Without People, People Without Jobs” SCNetwork event is if we choose to redescribe the demand and supply challenge, there are at least partial solutions.

Jelena Zikic laid out a business case for tapping into the pool of underemployed immigrant professionals, start-

ing by closely examining our perspectives on diversity. She also challenged us to reimagine retirement; we can no longer afford to focus on it as an absolute exit.

Emad Rizkalla, e-learning wunderkind, spoke of using technology to accelerate closing the gap. Greg Vertelman, transition specialist, asked us to look for the barriers that we have erected that discourage available

talent from filling available positions.

The most egregious source (and a key solution) to the skills gap is one Rizkalla touched on. It is appalling that in an information economy, employers consistently spend less on employee development and turn more to hiring themselves out of a talent problem — even when there is no talent to hire. It is no wonder disengagement statistics are horrendous — with no commitment to talent, let alone talent development, employees offer no commitment in return. Millennials, anyone?

From a strategic capability perspective, what the panellists did not cover is the top of the house: The causal links between the CEO and talent development. Are our leaders bright and nimble enough to connect strategy to talent?

The CEO is accountable for determining strategy. She must ask, “What is our strategy? Does it make sense in the environment in which we find ourselves (including the talent environ-

ment)? Are we adapting fast enough?”

It is only with an articulated strategy that an organization can build an effective structure to execute that strategy, including the roles needed to populate that structure.

And it is only after defining structure that an organization can rationally compare defined roles to current and available talent, thereby revealing skill gaps.

Strategy and talent are connected, and yet how many organizations make the effort to continuously circle back on their strategy to see if it makes sense in our new world? How much of the gap is just fallout from legacy strategy?

And, since the CHRO advises the CEO on strategy, how much of the skills gap is our own creation?

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