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The Role of Talent Management in the Management of Contemporary Hotels¹

ABSTRACT

In the dynamic environment of the tourism industry, especially in hotel management, a properly implemented concept of talent management has a significant impact on attracting, hiring, developing, and maintaining outstanding, talented employees in order to develop long-term. The main goal of the article is to determine the role of talent management in the management of contemporary hotels. Based on numerous sources, the authors argue that the approach to talent management in hotels leads to more effective use of human resources and builds a competitive advantage. In the first part of the article, the authors explain the concepts of talent and talent management and highlight the importance of talent management in human resources management. The next part describes the special role of managers in the process of talent management in hotels. Next, the authors present the employment in the hotel industry in EU countries; in the last part of the article they indicate mistakes and challenges related to the talent management in the hotel industry.

Challenges in the field of talent management basically apply the entire process, managing the whole talent flow (entry, learning, development, compensation, analysis and evaluation, and exit). One of the biggest challenges in the field of talent management are attracting talented employees and positioning the organization (hotel) as a desirable employer and systematic building and updating the organization's talent map, with an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of talented employees as well as the possibilities and limitations of their development.

KEYWORDS: talent management, talent, managers, hotels

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STRESZCZENIE

Rola zarządzania talentami w zarządzaniu współczesnymi hotelami

W dynamicznym środowisku w branży turystycznej, szczególnie w hotelarstwie, właściwie wdrożona koncepcja zarządzania talentami ma istotny wpływ na przyciąganie i zatrudnianie, rozwijanie i utrzymywanie wybitnych, utalentowanych pracowników w celu budowania długoterminowego rozwoju. Głównym celem artykułu jest określenie roli zarządzania talentami w zarządzaniu współczesnymi hotelami. Na podstawie licznych źródeł autorki dowodzą, że wdrożenie koncepcji zarządzania talentami w hotelach wpływa na bardziej efektywne wykorzystywanie zasobów ludzkich i budowanie przewagi konkurencyjnej. W pierwszej części artykułu wyjaśniono pojęcia talent, zarządzanie talentami oraz znaczenie zarządzania talentami w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi. W kolejnej części opisano szczególną rolę menedżerów w procesie zarządzania talentami w hotelach. Następnie autorki przedstawiają zatrudnienie w hotelarstwie w krajach UE, wskazując w ostatniej części artykułu błędy i wyzwania związane z zarządzaniem talentami w hotelarstwie.

Wyzwania z zakresu zarządzania talentami dotyczą w zasadzie całego procesu, zarządzania całym przepływem talentów (wejście, nauka, rozwój, wynagradzanie, analiza i ocena oraz wyjście). Jednym z ważnych wyzwań w obszarze zarządzania talentami jest umiejętność przyciągania utalentowanych pracowników oraz pozycjonowanie organizacji (hotelu) jako pożądanego pracodawcy, a także systematyczne budowanie i aktualizowanie mapy talentów organizacji, ze wskazaniem mocnych i słabych stron utalentowanych pracowników oraz możliwości i ograniczeń w ich rozwoju.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: zarządzanie talentami, talent, menedżerowie, hotele

Introduction

The changes taking place in both the environment surrounding an organization and its interior force managers to change their approach toward employees. Contemporary organizations that want to achieve a competitive advantage try to consciously seek and retain valuable and unique human capital. In the era of a knowledge-based economy, the process of education and employee development is treated as an important investment that affects the organization's success. It is very noticeable in relation to service organizations, whose operation is based mainly on the employees hired to serve customers (Lee-Ross, 2003, p. 263; Casado, 2001, p. 28). This is very visible in the hospitality industry, known as the "people industry" (Kim et al., 2007, p. 421), due to the dominant role of labor-intensive and complex activities in human resources management area (Casado,

2001, p. 29) and the way of treating guests, employees' activities and their communication that show how important the guests to the organization (Martin, 2006, p. 63).

In this regard, the concept of talent management raises more and more interest. Employees with the special talents and skills to provide high-quality services play a key role in gaining a competitive advantage (Baron & Armstrong, 2008, p. 39).

The authors want to emphasize that managers' knowledge of employee talent management is of great importance. It is the manager, their awareness of their employees' roles, and the use of employees' talents that often determines in which direction the team and the whole organization will go in the future. Effective talent management should allow for the full use of the potential of employees. Creating such conditions in which the manager can achieve the organization's goals through the proper use of employee talent requires reflection on the determinants and challenges faced by contemporary managers in the area of talent management. Talent management is not only a theory, but more and more often a concept in organizations that already influences and will affect human resource management in modern enterprises – especially service providers – in the coming years.

Talent management process means for companies, how to attract and recognize talented employees, what development activities to provide them with and how to measure their performance and progress.

Talent management is an integrated set of enterprise-wide, HRM policies and practices and a source of competitive advantage. The benefits of an effectively implemented talent management strategy include improved employee recruitment and retention rates and enhanced employee engagement. These elements play a very important role in hotels.

The aforementioned activities are very important in the context of effective talent management in the hotel industry, because employees with high potential and above-average results are necessary for the effective implementation of the goals and development of each hotel.

The significance of talent management in contemporary human resources management

One of the most important areas of modern human resources management is talent management. Especially in service companies, acquiring and retaining talent in the organization and long-term commitment to the effective implementation of goals are important challenges faced by managers and HR departments.

The concept of talent management was created in the 21st century based on the theory of human resource management (Michaels et al., 2001). It was connected with the organization's need to find strategies and techniques to build a competitive advantage based on the most valuable resources in the organization, such as employees and was also a response to diverse research results on the relationship between human resources management and organizational efficiency (Datta et al., 2005; Huselid et al., 1997, pp. 171–188).

The simplest approach to the meaning of the term talent indicates that it is “extraordinary, outstanding abilities in some field,” “a talented person,” or “someone endowed with outstanding creative abilities” (Długosz-Kurczabowa, 2003, p. 493). We can say that talent is a unique and extraordinary ability that a person has in a given area. Based on a survey conducted in 2010, a group of 53 companies operating on the Polish market defined a talent as a person with high development potential (93%), with unique, exceptionally developed competencies (59%), and who achieves above-average results (63%). The role of employees' identifying with organizational values and their promotion in everyday work was also emphasized. The most important competencies, according to the respondents, included creativity, innovation, a search for solutions, results orientation, a focus on development, leadership skills, openness to changes, and flexibility (Jarosławska, 2011, pp. 32–33). This was confirmed by other research on new trends in HRM, indicating the acquisition and retention of key employees as the second most important challenge among important HR trends (61% of personnel managers from 59 countries believed that this was currently an important trend and another 25% that it would become significant within 1 to 3 years) (Deloitte, 2013, p. 7). According to the results of a study conducted in a large international consulting firm, talent was considered “the natural potential or ability to perform certain activities above an average level. Talent cannot be created, but it can be developed, refined, and destroyed” (Kwiecień, 2004, p. 162). The above definitions describe talent from the point of view of the individual. The same approach is presented in the literature on human resources management (Michaels et al., 2001, pp. 9–11; Listwan, 2010, pp. 20–27; see also Knap-Stefaniuk & Karna, 2017, p. 104) Other authors have analyzed the definition of talent from the organization's perspective or according to the number of people it concerns (Borkowska, 2005, pp. 11–13; Cheese et al., 2008, pp. 7–10; Armstrong, 2011, p. 168).

As in the case of the word talent, there are many views in the literature on talent management. Therefore, there is no single consistent definition of talent management (Aston & Morton, 2005, p. 30; Brittain, 2007, pp. 46–47; Davis et al., 2007, p. 38; Bieniok, 2008, pp. 409–422). Byham

(2001, pp. 56–60) and Heinen and O’Neill (2004, pp. 67–82) described talent management as a set of actions a human resources department can take in recruitment, selection, development, career management, and succession. In contrast, Lewis and Heckman distinguished three approaches to talent management in the literature:

- identifying it with human resources management (mainly focused on recruitment, development of leadership, succession planning, etc.);
- emphasizing the importance of “forecasting the needs of employees and managing the progress of employees through positions” (often compared to planning succession or planning human resources);
- focusing on managing talented people, so-called “A performers” (Lewis & Heckman, 2006, pp. 139–154).

In the literature, one can also find another approach to talent management, namely, that it includes activities related to identifying, attracting, integrating, developing, motivating, and maintaining employees (Kamil et al., 2011, pp. 147–162).

An organization that has talent and properly manages them can count on better quality and results and increased innovation. That is why it is so important from the organization’s point of view to create appropriate conditions for developing and maintaining such employees (Maliszewska, 2005, p. 78).

Appropriately matching the activities carried out in talent management and in HRM can contribute to the organization and its individual employees achieving many benefits:

- the opportunity to develop a career path and to develop in the workplace, on both a personal and team level;
- the increase in employees’ confidence and skills, and consequently, higher productivity;
- increased efficiency and effectiveness in achieving individual goals and the organization;
- a motivated and committed team operating in the organization;
- more flexible employees;
- more satisfaction and freedom among employees in building relationships within their teams and interest in new styles of management in the organization;
- an organizational culture that is conducive to increasing employees’ importance in the organization, including appreciating their opinions and increasing respect and empathy among employees and managers.

In summary, it can be stated that talent has been defined by many authors in a variety of ways. Talent can be determined from the perspective

of an individual or organization, for all employees, or only selected individuals. The same applies to talent management. The majority of definitions define talent management as a comprehensive, well-planned and systematic process that includes attracting, identifying, selecting, developing, and assessing talented employees, in order to increase efficiency of operations.

It is important for contemporary organizations to make the best use of human resources potential. This means that organizations will increasingly seek appropriate tools to manage outstanding employees (Cannon & McGee, 2012, pp. 16–17). Human resource departments have an important task as strategic partners in finding, managing, and developing talent and in ensuring that individual and organisational objectives are aligned (Nilsson & Eilström 2012, p. 40).

Human resources management professionals claim that talent management, defined as the process through which organizations meet their needs for talent in strategic jobs (Cappelli & Keller, 2014), is one of the biggest challenges that organizations will face in the 21st century (Ashton & Morton, 2005).

The role of managers in talent management in contemporary hotels

According to GUS, in 2016 there were 608,400 tourist accommodation establishments in EU countries, including 201,973 hotel facilities (i.e., hotels, motels, boardinghouses, and similar facilities). There was an 8.1% increase in the number of hotels and similar facilities compared to the previous year. Italy had the most tourist accommodation establishments (29.3%), while Poland was home to only 1.7% of all facilities. In 2016, there were 3,965 hotels and other accommodation facilities in Poland (37% of the accommodation database in Poland), in which there were 325,800 beds (i.e., 43.5% of the total number of beds in Poland) (GUS, 2018, p. 1).

Tourism is one of the world's leading industries in terms of the number of employees. In 2013, the tourism industry involved almost 101 million people, or 3.4% of all those working in the world (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014, p. 4). This was five times more than in the automotive or chemical industries, four times more than in mining or higher education, and twice as many as in the banking or communication services. It is estimated that an average of USD 1 million invested in tourism generates 50 new jobs, or twice as many as the same million invested in the financial or automotive sector (Turner & Sears, 2013, p. 67).

According to some researchers, there is a low reputation of employment in the hotel industry, with low pay, anti-social work hours, and limited career opportunities (Baum, 2008, pp. 720–729; Duncan et al., 2013; Price, 1994, pp. 44–62; Riley, 2000). In fact, Gilbert and Guerrier (1997, pp. 115–132) suggested that understanding the diversity within this industry is important for management, in particular when using talent management. Numerous studies have shown the existence of a dilemma among hotel graduates (50% of respondents) related to staying in the hospitality industry and developing a career there (Barron, 2008). Another element is closely related to the positive image of the organization and its ability to attract candidates with great potential and to retain existing talent. Barron et al. (2007, pp. 119–128) also noted that some weaknesses in this industry may be due to difficulties in dealing with various types of customers, which is why people working there should be diligent and patient.

In the hotel industry, a reputation does not result from opening more hotels or from the products offered there, but from offering excellent service and value to their clients. This is possible only thanks to the employees and appropriate conditions for their development. (Cuenllas, 2014).

As mentioned above, the hotel industry is very labor-intensive; therefore, proper employee management is a very important issue (Grobler & Diedricks, 2009, pp. 1–27). Talent management should be introduced not only because it leads to higher employee productivity, but also because having well-trained staff is the key to satisfying tourist demand in an extremely competitive global tourism environment (Cheese, 2008, p. 46). According to the authors of this article, the one of the most important task of contemporary managers includes making the knowledge that exists within the organization accessible to employees. This can take place as both formal and informal solutions. Knowledge management and sharing experiences should be an element of everyday functioning in every company.

The modern approach to managing talented employees requires from managers the responsibility, commitment, and cooperation with employees from personnel departments. The effective implementation of tasks related to the development of employees also largely depends on their ambition and motivation. Important features and skills of hotel managers include communication skills, an ability to establish and maintain a good rapport with employees, skills for coping with stress, independence, and commitment. The literature indicates that a significant part of a hotel manager's time (80%) is spent communicating with hotel guests, superiors, and – most often – subordinates (J.C. Lolli, 2013, p. 295; J. Lolli, 2013, p. 356). According to Brownell, interpersonal communication in the organization is a key skill for managers wishing to achieve success in the area of human resources management, and communication practices are among

the most powerful tools to improve organizational efficiency (Brownell, 2003, p. 46). Managers, in particular with respect to talented employees, should be able to properly recognize their training and development needs and give them new, ambitious challenges. Effective talent management should create the possibility of building a base of employees with a great deal of potential and competence and should secure the future of the company. by constantly acquiring and caring for the development of talented employees.

It should be underline that the ability to access talent is directly related to an organization's performance. Human capital is now being linked to management processes like succession planning, leadership growth, retention, and career planning.

Mistakes and challenges in talent management (in hospitality)

The decision to introduce talent management in an organization requires both managers and employees of the HRM department planned activities. However, it is difficult to avoid mistakes when dealing with people.

The bad reputation of the hotel industry among qualified graduates and the high employee turnover indicate that such organizations will face greater challenges in talent management than other sectors (O'Leary & Deegan, 2005, pp. 421–432). In addition, an ambiguous attitude from managers towards investing in employee development or the use of rigid employment rules may lead to a reduction in the use of talent management in the hotel industry (Jithendran & Baum, 2000, pp. 403–421). This is reflected in the approach of job candidates seeking temporary work or in the general unwillingness to take up work in this industry.

A well-conducted talent management program associates the tasks carried out in the organization with the type of competence and the level of talent required for these competencies. However, the mere acquisition of talents does not guarantee that the organization will gain the potential benefits, such as acceleration of strategic changes implementation (Haas-Edersheim, 2009, pp. 195–196). It is indispensable to create proper conditions for creating and developing talents. Some managers, talent management activities only identify it with trainings and attractive trips (excursions for employees). This is definitely not enough. However, in order to achieve all the benefits of talent management, it should be treated as a continuous process and should include continual improvement of working conditions such as interpersonal relations and leadership attitudes (Połaska, 2009).

Talent management should, therefore, assume a systemic character through appropriate planning and the inclusion of all elements: identifying talent in the organization as well as attracting, integrating, developing, motivating, or maintaining employees. The organization may make mistakes with each of these activities, either by improperly identifying talented people in the organization or by selecting criteria that does not correspond to the tasks required of a given position. This can cause frustration among employees due to the inability to use their knowledge and link the talent management program to the business objectives of the organization (Berger & Berger, 2011, p. 6).

Organizations around the world who do not sufficiently care about the development and satisfaction of their employees are having more and more difficulty finding and retaining the best, most talented employees. The fight for talent will be won by organizations that develop systems to increase the attachment (loyalty) of employees to the employer (Sosińska, 2008, p. 15). This particularly applies to hotel companies in peripheral locations.

In organizations that use talent management, the managers do not always understand the needs of their subordinates. Over 89% of the managers in one survey considered low remuneration as the main factor behind employee resignation, while 88% of employees indicated management staff, organizational culture, surroundings (Bremen & Sejen, 2012, p. 57; Branham, 2005, p. 3), long decision-making paths, little international nature of the work, a negative image of the organization, unfavorable organizational climate, or an unfavorable economic situation of the company (Thom et al., 2003, p. 238). Such discrepancy in viewpoints may lead to improper development of talent management programs.

Talent management programs are often offered only to selected people, which can significantly demotivate other staff members from improving their skills or may lead to conflict and internal rivalry between employees stimulated by an organizational culture that promotes aggression.

According to a study published in *McKinsey Quarterly*, the most significant errors in implementing talent management programs were not involving both senior managers and line managers in the area of talent management and not focusing the organizational culture on cooperation and shared use of resources (Guthridge et al., 2008, p. 51). As you can see, this approach of managers to talent management is, to a large extent, becoming a frequent cause of inefficiency in companies' talent management program.

Another key element of the proper implementation of talent management is the size of the organization and its strategic orientation towards talent management. It is pointed out that in hotels belonging to large

networks, activities in talent management are better planned and organized for example, information about vacancies is better presented both internally and externally or managers have basic knowledge of employment and discrimination regulations and are trained in interviewing and selection techniques. A different, more uniform, and simplified level of activity can be observed in small hotels. Thus, occupational segregation is higher in smaller establishments (Campos-Soria et al., 2011, pp. 91–102).

In many cases, talent management is tactical, short-term, and unrelated to personal strategy – even more unrelated to business strategy – instead of strategic and long-term. Contemporary companies offer not enough attractive working conditions and development for talented individuals, which often leads to the employees' leaving (). It is not only about remuneration or other forms of benefits. They neglect to create a friendly organizational culture or to improve the quality of management (Klimkiewicz, 2007, pp. 38–39). Talent management in the hotel industry requires formal processes, stakeholder participation, and strong links between leadership and talent so that the industry-specific skills and attributes can be shared at all organizational levels.

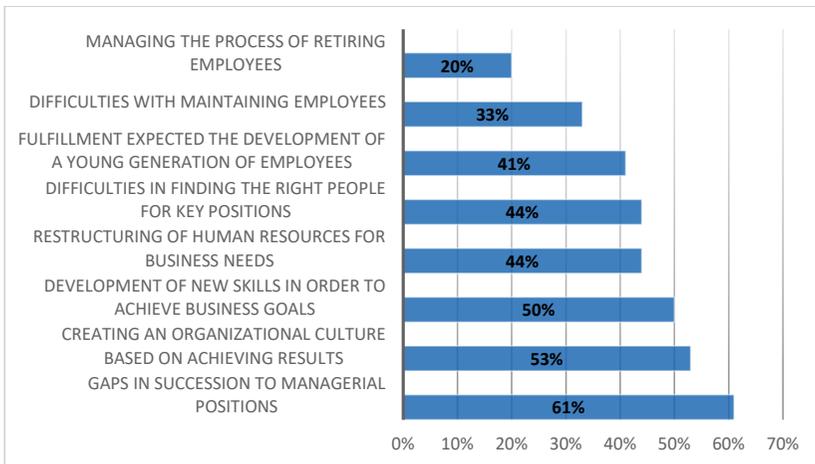


Figure 1. Challenges in the talent management process, based on the Bersin & Associates Research Bulletin study, 2009

Source: Bersin & Associates, 2009, p. 2.

The results of a study by Bersin & Associates showed that organizations in many countries face difficult challenges in the talent management process (Figure 1). In particular, this concerns an increasing gap in succession in managerial positions (61% of surveyed companies), an appropriate

organizational culture that is based on achieving results (53%) or directly related to the talent management process, namely, the acquisition and retention of employees (due to the shortage of people with appropriate competencies in the labor market).

The ever-growing specialization means that there are ever-shrinking groups of specialists in a particular field from which one can recruit employees. This makes it necessary to search for, develop, and retain people who show the desired skills. At the same time, however, increasingly sophisticated and extensive competencies are required to an increasing extent. The pressure associated with closely matching the organization's offerings to the expectations of different types of clients means that organizations expect more sophisticated communication skills and cultural sensitivity from job candidates.

Contemporary organisations encounter considerable challenges in identifying and developing the actual talent of an individual relevant to the actual demands of the work (Nilsson & Eilström, 2012, p. 38).

Among the difficulties and challenges related to talent management are also mentioned: human capital is not adequately associated with business strategy, lack of accountability and capability for talent development, inconsistent execution and integration of talent management, limited use of meaningful talent analytics (Hussin Jose Hejase et al., 2016, p. 510).

Some of the main major challenges in talent management include also (Nilsson & Eilström 2012; Hussin Jose Hejase et al., 2016; Wójcik 2017; Pearce, Harney et al, 2019):

- the new war for talents will not be determined, by market “shortage” in the area of talents, but rather by organizations’ incapacity to successfully talent management;
- it will be necessary to build the organization’s talent map, with an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of talented employees as well as the possibilities and limitations of their development;
- the next challenge is related to a very difficult questions: Will managers and HR specialists be able to interpret the new “talent codes” properly (especially employees’ from younger generations) – their talents’ abilities, expectations, values? Will “new” talents be loyal to the organizations?
- managing the whole talent flow (entry, learning, development, compensation, analysis and evaluation, and exit) requires substantive preparation (unfortunately, this is still often missing in organizations) and a very individual approach to talented employees;
- effective positioning the organization as a desirable employer attracting talented employees (inside and outside the organization).

Organizations that fail to develop talent management strategies are less likely to succeed in international business (Guthridge & Komm, 2008). This, of course, also applies to hotels which operate internationally.

In summary, it is important for contemporary organizations to make the best use of their human resources potential. This means that organizations are increasingly noticing problems finding high-caliber specialists in the labor market and then keeping them in the organization. Another challenge for organizations is the creation of an appropriate organizational culture that would be conducive to the further development of employees while achieving the organization's goals. Some organizations are unable to manage talented employees by pursuing a policy of exploitation instead of one of competence development. The literature on the subject mentions many mistakes organizations make in terms of talent management programs, including not involving both senior managers and line managers or focusing on tactical, short-term, and accidental activities.

Conclusions

The increasing competition on the market means that organizations are constantly looking for new solutions that can improve the results of their operations. They are moving toward new and innovative ways to manage the most important capital in an organization: human capital. Many companies decide to institute talent management as a method of human resources management. Talent management is such a process by which people find their hidden talents and adapt activities within the organization to make the best use of them. Properly carried out, the process brings the organization many benefits, at both the level of the entire organization (e.g., increased employee engagement, better organization results, and thus development) as well as of individual employees (e.g., development of existing and new skills). Creating an appropriate organizational culture, introducing changes in the organizational structure and employee management style, and individualizing the incentive system are prerequisites for identifying, developing, and retaining talents in an organization.

In order for companies to realize their organizational visions, they need staff who are high-potential and looking toward the future. Especially in the case of hotel management, talented employees are extremely important, as they determine the effective implementation of the strategy and goals.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that talent management is an integral part of a "healthy organization," which is aware that it makes much more sense to develop and retain key talent than continuous selection, hire

and train new employees. This is especially important in hotels, where work requires competence, experience and building good, long-term relationships with customers.

The authors wish to emphasize that effective talent management should be visible in building good, positive relationships within the organization and in the ability to communicate effectively, solve problems, and shape employees' involvement in development. It is also important to plan succession in talent management programs, especially to support the development of younger, talented employees whose potential may have a major impact on the functioning of the company in the future. Due to the large array of challenges that appear before organizations in the area of talent management, it is essential to continually study this phenomenon.

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