**ORGB2**

**Personality, Perception and Attribution**

**Case Study**

**Finding and Developing Employee Talent at Deloitte**

Recruiting and retaining talented employees is a challenge faced by all businesses, and many of them go to extraordinary lengths to recruit the “best and brightest” as well as to retain talented employees. How do companies go about doing this? Are these extraordinary efforts worth it? Do these efforts have a demonstrable pay-off for the businesses that use them?

Consider Deloitte, a “Big Four” accounting firm. “‘Deloitte’ is the brand under which 165,000 dedicated professionals in independent firms throughout the world collaborate to provide audits, consulting, financial advice, risk management, and tax services. These firms are members of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Deloitte uses a variety of approaches and techniques to recruit talented people and ensure that their talents are effectively utilized within the company.

In England, for instance, Deloitte is one of many firms that benefits from an educational initiative that is achieving extraordinary results in developing talented young people. The program, known as Teach First, was launched in 2002 and is loosely modeled on the Teach for America program in the United States. “Teach First recruits top [university] graduates by offering them a challenge: intensive training, full teacher certification, and the chance to help turn around a failing school—all within two years.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Each year approximately 1,300 applicants compete for the 200 Teach First positions. Program participants are in the top 3 percent of their graduating classes, and have degrees in finance, math, engineering, and philosophy.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Teach First recruits highly talented young people by promising them the opportunity to make a substantial impact within two years, which CEO Brett Wigdortz, says is “a very powerful message for young people.” Wigdortz also observes that today’s graduates want to make a difference and have real leadership opportunities to prove themselves, and that they value social responsibility.[[4]](#footnote-4) “Teach First graduates demonstrate skills that often take years to learn on the job,” says Jo Owen, a former partner with the business consulting firm Accenture, and current director of strategy for Teach First. Owen notes most graduates learn technical skills early in their business careers, but these are not the skills that people must have in order to succeed in the long term. “Future leaders learn early on the tough lessons of managing people, leadership, initiative and entrepreneurialism. The Teach First program helps graduates gain these lifetime skills,” observes Owen.[[5]](#footnote-5) All of these skills are ones that many businesses, including Deloitte, want in their employees. And the Teach First experience is often a stepping-stone to another career, which enables companies like Deloitte to benefit without making a substantial additional investment in training and development.

Deloitte seeks out talented people in other ways as well. As an aid to identifying prospective employees who have the potential to be successful, the accounting firm requires applicants to take a verbal reasoning aptitude test. Sarah De Carteret, national graduate recruitment manager for the U.S. offices of Deloitte, says that “[v]erbal reasoning is hugely important because we are not looking for bean counters.”[[6]](#footnote-6) She adds that Deloitte employees perform a lot of advisory work that requires writing reports and analyzing information.[[7]](#footnote-7) Screening prospective employees with testing devices such as the verbal reasoning aptitude test helps to ensure that new hires have the requisite skills for success.

Deloitte’s concern about employee talent is not just limited to the recruiting process. In its U.S. locations, the firm has developed internal mechanisms for assessing the skills, interests, knowledge, and career objectives of existing employees who are dissatisfied with their present situation. The Deloitte Career Connections (DCC) program helps “dissatisfied staff to figure out interests and skills that might be a better fit somewhere else in the organization.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The DCC program employs a variety of assessment tools, including “an online Myers Briggs personality test, [a] Strong Interest-type tool, and a values-based exercise to help staff consider strengths and interests that may fit with their personalities.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Subsequent to this thorough assessment, Deloitte helps these employees to discover the most feasible way to address the sources of their dissatisfaction and to accomplish their career objectives within the organization.

Has the DCC program benefitted the company? The most obvious impact has been on developing and retaining talented employees, rather than having to recruit new employees. In financial terms, “DCC estimates that the firm has saved about $83.4 million, calculated with a turnover cost of twice the average annual salary of $76,000.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

On balance then, do these various programs really help Deloitte in recruiting and retaining people who are really the “best and brightest”?

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1. “About Deloitte,” http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/section\_home/0,1041,sid%253D2250,00.html (accessed June 18, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. Felix, “**Teach Your Way to the Top,”** *Director* 60(2) (September 2006): 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid., 71 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. E. Keelan, “Personal File: Psychometric Tests—Psychokiller?,” *Accountancy* (May 1, 2003): 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Anonymous, “**How Coaching Helps a ‘Big Four’ Accounting Firm Retain Staff,”** *HR Focus* 83(1) (January 2006): 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid., 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)