SCAN

HOT TOPIC
UNCOVER YOUR EMPLOYEES’ HIDDEN TALENTS

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Uncover Your Employees’ Hidden Talents

Even if we possess superhero level potential, we are rarely aware of the full extent of our own hidden talents. With the advent of AI and technological progress, it is now more important than ever to optimise opportunities to unleash the full extent of our all-human potential. However, the question remains: how exactly can we increase our productivity, especially if we are not aware of our own unique innate skills and talent?

This Hot Topic will shed light on how you can best uncover true talent within yourself and your company. We hope it will encourage you to re-consider what your employees truly have to offer, from a perspective you may not have previously considered.
Research suggests that employees expect to change job within five years. What would happen if one of your best employees stepped out today? What would be the best way to find talents and future leaders? Or maybe your most talented employee is under your nose and you don’t even know?

Although research constantly seeks to identify the best way to assess the hidden potential of employees, it often neglects a crucial component: innate and natural talent. A growing body of research has highlighted the revelatory power of gamification – the application of key elements of game playing (e.g. point scoring and competition) to help uncover an employee’s hidden potential.

In acknowledgement of the increasing interest in the use of gamification within business, recent research has suggested that despite their “bad” reputation, videogames could be a useful strategy in uncovering hidden talent. To elaborate, people who are good at computer games have been shown to demonstrate attributes such as determination, strategic thinking, problem solving abilities and resource management. However, the characteristics which are revealed in the game tend to be undermined and relegated to the world of gaming. Consequently, gamers might not even be aware that they possess those hidden skills, which are highly desirable in the workplace and can be applied outside of the virtual world.
As well as talent identification and development, organisations have been able to successfully exploit gamification processes as a means to:

**Assess key employee competencies** – This may include the development of activities which enable more accurate identification of desirable employee attributes such as creativity and critical thinking.

**Enhance engagement** – Gamification allows for greater flexibility within work-related practices. Consequently, employees can engage in more meaningful work which provides a greater sense of autonomy and fulfilment.

**Foster positive emotion** – We all know the main objective of a game is to provide a sense of enjoyment, therefore you’re perhaps unsurprised to hear that gamification helps employees unleash their imagination and creativity which, in turn, fosters creativity which can lead to better results.

**Initiate flow states** – Gamification can allow greater immersion in activities which actively challenge employees. A by-product of this immersion is the presence of the most elusive psychological state “flow”. Flow is regarded as the optimal performance state, which in turn could help workplace productivity reach an all time high.

Still not convinced? Look at some of the further benefits below:
The terms “work” and “play” are rarely seen as synonymous. However, within current business practices, there is no denying the influence of gamification is growing. Consequently, we need to establish how we can facilitate a working environment that champions game-based elements. By doing so, we may find ourselves one step closer to unearthing the hidden talents within our organisation.

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<td>Tasks are repetitive but fun</td>
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<td>Feedback is constant</td>
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<td>Failure is expected and encouraged</td>
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<td>High levels of collaboration</td>
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<td>High levels of autonomy</td>
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<td>High levels of risk</td>
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<td>Obstacles are intentional</td>
<td>Obstacles are accidental</td>
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**Action Point:** Based on the information presented in this month’s Hot Topic, how prepared is your organisation to embrace gamification? Consider three action points you could take to integrate elements of gamification into your team’s working practices.

**DEEP DIVE: Featured Techniques**

Further your understanding of the Hot Topic on the KnowledgeBrief Advanced Management Platform: [www.knowledgebrief.com/login](http://www.knowledgebrief.com/login)

Open up strategic thinking. We have spoken about strategy, its planning and execution a lot. In the usual literature, top management teams are given the responsibility of formulating a strategy, whilst mid-level managers are left to implement that strategy. With the increase of knowledge workers and the demand to remain competitive, businesses are looking beyond their top management to access the best strategies from all levels of their organisation. Opening up strategic decisions can increase employee engagement, produce a greater variety of ideas and ultimately result in competitive advantage. But there are always dangers with opening up such decisions. The more people involved, the more groupthink can take over. As a result, certain individuals may not produce the quality of ideas the management team would want. Ultimately, your employees are a great, untapped resource. However, it is the management team who will have the final say. (BH)

Artificial intelligence is changing the world as we know it. The transformative power of AI has pushed companies to change existing management strategies in order to stay ahead in business. While people are still wary of AI, recent research suggests that implementing an Artificial Intelligence strategy can positively affect business processes and productivity. From better strategic goals to smarter products and optimised systems, AI has the potential to transform every business. Adopting an AI strategy does not mean using super-intelligent machines and transforming all your services into automated processes. It means changing your perspective and reviewing your big-picture strategic goals, while considering broader ethical implications. Employees will always need empathy and validation, and while AI will affect your company culture, it will not be able to replicate human attention anytime soon. So, are you ready to turn your AI strategy into reality? (F)

There’s leadership and followership, but what about a third option? It’s perhaps unsurprising to hear that within the world of modern management, there is an ever-increasing interest in the exploration of several diverse leadership styles. Nowadays, you can be a change leader, a visionary, an authentic leader, transformational or even post-heroic. Similarly, we are seeing a rise of interest in followership and exploring how subordinates can work better by being better followers. Unfortunately, few managers have the time and ability to engage in the over-ambitious leadership processes prescribed by popular literature. Moreover, many employees are often unenthused by the prospect of being "a follower". Consequently, we must acknowledge that leadership is but one tool in a range of options (including peer-influencing, group work and softer use of power) which we need to utilise in order to get greater followership buy-in from our employees. (OD)
4
Is your marketing showing the right colour? Green marketing strategies are gaining support from companies worldwide. This stems from pressure from the public and protests against environmental impacts from industry. Green accounting is an evolving concept which links the financial impacts with environmental business practice. Part of this process is eco-marketing, which encompasses a broad range of activities including advertising products with eco-concerns (e.g. recyclable, renewable, eco-friendly etc.). Most companies are legally required to publish at least some environmental impact factors, but a lot of companies who are working to be more environmentally friendly are not maximising the potential marketing value of their actions. Ask yourself, is your company doing enough to battle its negative environmental impact? If so, is it effectively marketing the great green work it is doing? (UBIaR)

5
Mediate whistleblowing in Corporate Governance. Whistleblowing has gained much attention with recent scandals and payment irregularities. Based on professional accountants in Indonesia, new research aims to shed some light on the intentions behind whistleblowers. As expected, the preferred method to report wrongdoing is anonymous. However, internal auditors are more likely to blow the whistle than external. Internal whistleblowers usually observe violations within the organisation such as discrimination, corruption, or other unethical behaviour. External whistleblowers usually observe non-compliance with the fulfilment of corporate social responsibility and the environment. What can we do with these findings? First, aim to understand your audit firms’ staffing criteria regarding ethical standards of behaviour. Second, implement an ethics programme to provide guidance and increase responsibility. Finally, provide a safe hotline to reduce fear of retaliation. Although there are some limitations regarding cultural factors, ethical awareness and ethical judgement should still be encouraged in trustful leadership. (JBE)

6
An organisational perspective on mental health support. How does your organisation support an employee who is returning to work following issues with mental health? This can be a delicate situation for many organisations, particularly those unfamiliar with mental health disorders. With the increasing number of employees taking long-term sick leave due to depression, anxiety and stress, research emphasises the important role that organisations play in an individual’s sustainable return to work. They argue that ‘return to work’ policies should be introduced in collaboration with employees, otherwise, what may look like an excellent HR policy may not actually benefit the worker. Furthermore, a recent survey found that only 30% of managers have been trained in managing mental health in the workplace in the last year, and 49% have never received any training. Managers need professional training and with the rise of mental health issues, it is important that staff feel supported upon their return to work in order to thrive and to want to stay. (CMI)

7
Train your managers in how to regularly show appreciation. Cash as a carrot may not always be the best incentive to attract and keep top talent. What employees crave even more is to feel that their managers appreciate them and aren’t afraid to show it. Forms of appreciation may include flexible work-at-home schedules, gift cards for pulling off impressive projects, or even just by saying “thank you” for a job well done. These types of rewards work because they tap into three strong psychological needs: (1) employees long for autonomy, with the freedom to choose how to do their work; (2) they want to appear competent, armed with the skills needed to perform; and (3) they want to feel a sense of belonging by socially connecting with colleagues in a meaningful way. (HBSWK)

8
Is your culture alive? A recent research paper systematically compared corporate culture with a human body, stating that culture is the circulatory system keeping the company’s vision alive. Five key areas when assessing culture are: (1) Values: the heart of the organisation, which forms the principles of the culture. (2) Leadership: leaders and HR professionals play a vital role, ensuring that company’s health and welfare is embedded in the organisation. (3) People: is your organisation ensuring people are retained, supported and developed? (4) Communication: open lined communication is essential for the success of the organisation; does your company foster open communication? (5) Evaluation: constant checks give businesses an opportunity to grow and develop, is your organisation continuously looking at ways to improve? (HR)

9
Are you missing a trick? Thinking an ecosystem is just a supply chain could be limiting the greater value of the concept. The rise of ecosystems in business requires a new way of thinking so it does not end up as just another buzzword that gets lost in the smoke. Although ecosystems won’t be the solution that every business needs, used in the right way, they are invaluable at exploring new areas of possibilities. Fundamentally, ecosystems provide new ways of managing the trade-off between flexibility and commitment, bringing together networks involved in the delivery of a specific product or service through both competition and cooperation. An ecosystem can contain a supply chain and much more. So, ensure you are making good use of them by shifting from using traditional, static company centric perspective. Distinguish yourself by being dynamic, collaborative, influence based, indirect, emergent and network orientated. (SMR)
10
How to close the deal. 75% of buyers and 84% of executives use social media sites to make serious purchasing decisions. You can build a stronger business network and connect with potential buyers by utilising social media platforms. To achieve this: (1) Pay less attention to level of seniority and prioritise building relationships with peers first as they will connect you with opportunities in the future. (2) Be brief but personal in the first message you send to potential buyers/ suppliers. (3) Ensure you are personal and keep it brief, three bullets points should suffice and remember most people need to be able to read the message on a phone screen. (4) Let your voice come through in the message and give it a personal touch, much like handwritten notes. (5) Referencing a mutual connection boosts acceptance of messages by 51%, potentially bringing you closer to closing the deal. (HBR)

11
Learning leadership lessons from St Benedict. It may not seem the most obvious advice, but we can learn how to be better leaders by following the advice of St Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-543). And his monastic rule which is based on ten core values: love, prayer, stability, conversation, obedience, discipline, humility, stewardship, hospitality and community. Each of these values can be matched with an aspect of leadership. Conversation is about transformation arising from mutual learning and self-improvement. Prayer (perhaps slightly less applicable to modern business practices) is a call to introspection, mindfulness and reflection. However, the most striking rule is love. This means as a leader we must care for and develop others, come to each meeting with an assumption that everyone is working in good faith and as a result, this may be the hardest lesson of all. (JLM)

12
Rethink your employee incentive systems to gauge efforts. Many of us have recently received or delivered annual reviews and are left thinking how we can do better next time. Surprisingly, it can be difficult to gauge how much effort employees put in at work. A group of researchers set out to find the most effective incentive models and concluded the optimal compensation scheme was the single-bonus contract: employees receive a base wage and have the potential to earn a fixed bonus if their performance passes a certain threshold. However, there are some requirements to implement said system: (1) stop collecting infinite amounts of information about performance and focus on a single indicator; (2) define it in a clear way by setting realistic but challenging goals; and (3) ensure the team’s efforts are measured individually to avoid coattail riders. What single indicator can you use to drive your employees’ performance? (KI)

13
Bring in the tech experts. Technology has changed radically, but we still rely on the expertise of old tech experts. Why? Research has shown that a lack of software engineers is a massive constraint on company growth. Thousands of computer science students graduate each year in the UK but are never hired in said field. As such, leaders need to consider: (1) Focusing on talent – technical tools change fast, so it is important to hire skilled programmers that can adapt and learn. Focusing on coding knowledge could hinder your company’s progression. (2) Location, location, location – recruiting close to home can reduce your choices. Broaden your pool of choices and use your tech specialists to look for more recommendations. (3) Lightening the process – long recruitment processes can be a turn-off for popular programmers. Shorter processes followed by a short fixed-term contract could ensure you don’t miss out on a perfect match. (PM)

14
Turn on to electronics. The digital era has dramatically changed the way millennials communicate, interact and connect. Moreover, technology has served our society in so many ways from better connections to helping transportation, entertainment and healthcare delivery. The UK proudly carries a long heritage of technological innovation and a world class electronic sector. However, recent research identified that new generations, especially girls, are not interested in Science Technology Electronics and Mathematics (STEM) careers. A recent campaign is looking to raise awareness and demonstrate how careers in technology can be attractive to any pupil. Given the current political climate, and a shortage of STEM skillsets, pupils are faced with the same challenges when accessing the workplace as organisations aren’t prepared and are unaware of the importance of technology. Therefore, unlocking those fears in the workplace will help the new generations. (TJ)

“Ensure you are making good use of [your ecosystem] by shifting from using traditional, static company centric perspective. Distinguish yourself by being dynamic, collaborative, indirect, emergent and network orientated.”
NEW IDEAS ON CORE CAPABILITIES: THE INNOVATION ENGINE

Research, intelligence and new findings on innovation capabilities

15 How to stay relevant. Many managers struggle with the challenges of staying relevant despite changing working environments and, in some cases, a need to ‘reinvent’ ourselves to make sure we don’t fall behind. Community managers from the Chartered Management Institute offer five tips that have worked for them despite change and disruption to business. (1) **Keep learning and stay curious** – learn to do things differently and keep up to date with research. (2) **Watch start-ups** – get up to speed on new solutions and innovative technology within your industry. (3) **Have a beginner’s mind** – approach situations with openness and without preconceptions. (4) **Mix in different circles** – listening and learning from different sources can enrich your perspective. (5) **Know enough** – stay informed and be confident enough to engage in conversations about new innovations with people who know more. (CMI)

16 Check your advice-seeking approach. A widely recommended strategy for figuring out the most accurate solution to a complex problem is to reach out to multiple people and leverage the wisdom of others. But, according to a new paper, this is not always the best idea. More specifically, the results of nine studies show that when guidance is disregarded, advisors not only get offended, but they may punish colleagues by denigrating them, distancing themselves and, in some cases, even severing the relationship. Before asking someone for advice, we might want to ask ourselves ‘am I likely to accept this person’s advice?’ If not, we might want to reconsider asking them in the first place or think about how we can make the advisor feel validated even if we don’t take their advice. (OBHD)

17 Bridging martial art with agile business strategy. When discussing 21st century business, one might wonder how the Japanese martial art known as Shu Ha Ri applies to business strategy. A new paper has compared the agile business strategy with the “learning to master” process of the Shu Ha Ri. In the first step of the Shu Ha Ri, the student follows repeatedly the rules provided by his teacher. Once he has mastered all the rules, the student can question their validity and break them. In the final stage (Ri), the practitioner has fully assimilated the rules and becomes the rule itself. Similarly, to succeed in the agile business journey, organisations need to follow specific principles until they fully internalise them and become able to change rapidly, reconfigure strategy and renew their mindset according to different circumstances. Does your team have the perseverance to progress through the stages of this challenging journey? (UoE)

18 Resolving conflict within the team. It is no secret that conflict within the team can have negative consequences on teams, processes and performance. A group of researchers from across the USA studied early-stage Relationship Conflict (RC) and found that this can disrupt the team’s processes over time as individuals begin to feel threatened. They used a strategy for minimising negative emotions known as cognitive reappraisals in order to downplay these feelings of threat and found that after a few months negative emotions were overcome. The main reason for this is changes in perceived threat. Following cognitive reappraisal, the threat does not seem to matter over time. The researchers suggest that teams can resolve early-stage RC providing the manager addresses and tackles these feelings early on. (JoM)
that you are building a collaborative workplace: (1) **Consider collaborative working environments.** Removing physical barriers between employees and teams can create opportunities for ‘chance meetings’, helping to spark some new ideas when they randomly bump into each other. (2) **Value your specialists.** Understanding that someone can excel in one area and perform poorly in another could help make stronger teams that bring their specialities to the table. (3) **Mix it up.** Unusual pairings can help create the perfect blend to foster creativity and progress. Periodically reviewing these pairings can keep up the innovative tension. Remember not every task will benefit from collaborations and that is okay! (K0)

- **Leadership**

**How are you responding to the #MeToo movement?** Research indicates that male leaders are responding ineffectively and are avoiding mentoring women due to the fear of sexual harassment accusations. Research involving female mentees and senior male mentors provide us with valuable advice to allow us to reduce such fear: (1) **Consider how diverse your team is and, regardless of #MeToo, intentionally seek out female mentees to ensure a gender balanced team;** (2) **Suspend judgement or fear about the 2% of women who have falsely accused managers of sexual harassment;** (3) **Use an open dialogue, identify common interests and trust and professional care.** (HBR)

- **Leadership**

**The struggle is real…** There are plenty of tools organisations can use for recruitment. Online boards are significantly popular and are used by 87% of organisations. Other methods such as referrals, networking, social media, corporate websites and job fairs are used depending on the size of the company. However, a recent study suggests that 45% of companies are struggling to fill in jobs. This has become a struggle for small, medium and large companies because a lot of efforts are put in place to find the right people, but the return of investment is not effective. To improve this, experts suggest the following: (1) **Hire a social media expert to handle outreach;** (2) **Connect well with today’s workforce;** (3) **Partner with companies that have expertise when performing background checks.** (TD)

- **Process**

**To avoid failure, observe and learn.** Instead of fully focusing on the requirements to win, we must also identify shortcomings that hinder our success. Tulane University’s President, Scott Cowen, shares his insights and tips: (1) **Understand reality.** After hurricane Katrina struck, Scott aimed to bring back students by restoring the campus, but failed to understand
a thriving city was key. If change is the new normal, we must keep a critical mind. (2) Have courage when making decisions. Whether reviewing someone’s position or teams’ goals, Scott emphasises the need to overcome the fear of conflict and awkwardness and avoid inaction. (3) Show your authenticity. Make sure your team knows your strengths and weaknesses so they can help you in your decision-making and growth. (K@W)

26
Paths to make learning an enjoyable and meaningful process. A recent research study has found that the following paths have had a meaningful impact on learning: Arts – gives the learner an opportunity to explore, be inspired and understand different perspectives; Music – allows the learner to connect mentally and emotionally, contributing to creating a conducive environment; Storytelling – a powerful as well as inspiring tool. The research supports the idea that the workplace should have robust learning hubs in place to allow the learning to be accessible, enjoyable and easier, which will lead to better decision-making and an inspired workforce. (TJ)

27
Afraid of change? An easy guide to accepting innovation. In the office, people tend to resist change and often dislike the idea of new HR systems or the introduction of a new colleague. The reason behind this opposition to change is “cognitive bias”: the fear of the unknown and the assumption that change will be disruptive and negative. In order to circumvent cognitive bias, it is necessary to understand why it occurs. The second step is to provide people with relevant information and guidance on the benefits of change: why is change needed and what is its value? Information brings knowledge, shapes expectations and dissipates fear of innovating. Keeping an open, diplomatic and inviting attitude will also induce people to accept new things and remove resistance to change. (PM)

28
Why do so many talented women struggle to become leaders? Research suggests that talented women are less able to reach positions of leadership than men. A recent study monitoring the actions and words of male and female leaders for weeks showed that, despite equal levels of performance, women were promoted to leadership roles much less frequently than their male counterparts. The problem is not that women are less competent than men. On the contrary, women tend to perform better than men when managing people. The main reason why competent women struggle to emerge as leaders is that leadership continues to be associated with “traditional” masculine features, such as boldness, recklessness and self-centredness. Consequently, female leaders are evaluated more negatively even when their performance is better than that of men, even when those who evaluate them are women. Unless we change the biased preference for incompetent men over talented women, women will continue to be overlooked. (HBR)

29
Brown nosers, beware. In previous SCANs, we have been quick to highlight the merits of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB). However, is there a hidden agenda behind these seemingly altruistic acts? Whether or not you are acting in alignment with your core values or simply attempting to further your own professional ambitions, engaging in OCB could put you in a somewhat precarious position. Whilst your displays of OCB may be a genuinely unselfish attempt to positively influence workplace practices, you peers may choose to perceive your actions as primarily self-serving (particularly if you have a strong working relationship with your superiors). Conversely, if you haven’t taken the time to build a strong rapport with your manager, your OCB efforts are more likely to be perceived negatively by those in positions of change. Considering these findings, are we looking at a classic case of damned if you do, damned if you don’t? (JBP)

KEY INDICATORS
4th April 2019

UK
FTSE 7,378 ▲
RPIJ 2.5% ●
CPI 1.9% ▲
PPI (Output) 0.1 ▲
Retail Sales 4.0% ▼
GDP (Latest) 1.5% ▲
Industrial Production (Latest) 0.6% ▲

PMI
Manufacturing 55.1 ▲
Service 48.9 ▼
Construction 49.7 ▼

Global
Gold 1,291.11 ▼
Commodities 194 ▲
£ / € 1.17 ●
£ / $ 1.31 ▼
US GDP 3.0% ●
EU GDP 1.4% ▲

General
Business confidence -22 ▲
Business confidence (Manufacturers) 105.0 ●
Unemployment rate 3.9% ▼
Consumer confidence (GfK NOP) -13 ●

Profitability of UK companies (latest)
Non-financial companies’ net rate of return 12.6% ●
Manufacturing companies’ net rate of return 15.4% ●
Service companies’ net rate of return 17.1% ●
▲ Increase ▼ Decrease ● No change
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