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3 Secrets to Winning the War for Talent

Facing unprecedented competition for recruiting and retaining talented employees, today's employers are in an all-out talent war that has been lasting far too long. With Millennials now making up roughly half the American workforce and Generation Z now being in the workforce for a decade, the future of the workforce is undergoing dramatic changes.

Employers need a new battle plan. What's the secret weapon for attracting, developing, and managing today's talent? In a word: competencies.



Attract the People with the Skills You Need

Winning the war for talent starts with identifying, attracting, and hiring the people with the skills your organization needs. Leading with competencies for your recruitment efforts will help you cut through unconscious bias in the hiring process and identify a wider pool of qualified candidates.

In order to get applicants to say “yes,” be ready to market the job, your company culture, and all the benefits of working with your company. Be sure to:

- **Update job descriptions:** Especially when talent is scarce, every hire is important. You'll want employees who have the skills you need *and* who are the best “fit” for your culture. Update your [job descriptions](#) to include the competencies – the skills, knowledge, experience, and behaviors – you seek.
- **Go where your recruits are:** If you're hiring new college graduates, partner with the colleges and universities that offer the education your employees need. Create internship programs for their students and participate in job fairs on their campuses. For workers of all ages, think about recruiting in geographic markets that have a concentration of professionals with your targeted competencies.
- **Consider the gig economy:** Like it or not, more and more professionals are independent contractors, working part-time for multiple employers. In this tight labor market, consider whether some of your difficult-to-hire positions could be filled with contractors who can complete high-impact project work or contribute to your team on a part-time basis.

Build a Flexible, Transparent Learning Culture

We know that learning and development is a big part of the [employee experience](#) for workers of all ages and experience levels. Younger workers, especially, are eager to know what's needed to move into a desired position. The easier you make it for employees to know what skills and competencies they need to master, the better they can focus on closing their skill gaps and gaining valuable experience.

- **Tie learning to performance:** Learning for the sake of learning doesn't help anyone. Be sure your managers are connecting the dots between their employees' performance and the learning opportunities available to build desired skills and competencies.

- **Make upskilling the norm:** It's not possible to hire all the skills you need; technology and market conditions are changing too quickly. Nor can you afford to let the skills of your workforce get stale. At a time when less than one-third of open positions are filled with internal candidates, up your game by embracing reskilling for competitive advantage. You'll get ahead faster by shoring up and training the employees you have to fill the gaps without having to rely so heavily on recruiting the skills and talent you need.

Combat Your Quit Rate Strategically

The talent war is as much about retaining employees as it is about recruiting them. Our quit rate – the rate at which employees voluntarily leave their jobs – is at an all-time high in the U.S. Highly engaged employees look forward to going to work, collaborating with a team, and contributing to a company they care about.

- **Keep up with generational preferences:** Baby Boomers expect annual performance reviews and prefer classroom training. Generation X likes the flexibility of blended learning opportunities. Millennials prefer digital training and communication, with frequent performance feedback. Generation Z prefers digital communication for tasks but social, collaborative, real-time learning and knowledge-sharing. To keep your managers competent across a multi-generational workforce, be sure they're tuned into the preferences and expectations of each generation.
- **Invest in collaborative managers:** No longer do companies expect their managers to have all the answers. Instead, great managers are expected to foster a collaborative approach to work, where every person brings skills, knowledge, and perspective to the table for collective benefit. Just like the employees they manage, managers should be working on next-level competencies – such as fostering collaboration, coaching, communication, and decision-making – tied to great leadership. Classes, mentors, and feedback from upper management can all help to build the skills needed to manage well.
- **Celebrate company moves to adapt to market dynamics:** Your executive leadership team continually tracks market developments. When leaders at Lufthansa – an international maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) company – recognized a retirement trend just as market demand was expected to increase, they ramped up their training programs and targeted new demographics to meet demand. Urge your senior leaders to communicate when they're making a shift for competitive advantage. Your people will be energized by the information, optimistic about the company's future, and more likely to stay.

While attracting, developing, and managing today's talent is not new or different, leading with competencies is. By keeping individuals, teams, and management focused on advancing a set of evolving workforce competencies across the organization, you'll be one step ahead of competitors who don't.

Are you looking for a way to unleash the power of competencies in your organization? Ask about Avilar's WebMentor Skills™ assessment tool that helps organizations identify, analyze, and manage skill gaps within their workforce to drive improvements. Or contact us to learn more.

About Avilar

Avilar – The Competency Company™ is a leader in web-based competency management and learning solutions for corporations, government, and non-profit organizations. Formed in 1997, Avilar's award-winning WebMentor™ product line has built itself on highly adaptable product design. Avilar consultants are recognized as industry thought leaders and have decades of experience in implementation and analysis. Let Avilar help transform your organization from ordinary to extraordinary.