



**European
Talent Trends &
Challenges
Agility: The New
Must-Have**

Agility: The New Must-Have

That was the topic of an insightful TALiNT Partners and AMS virtual cheese and wine roundtable held on February 4 for talent leaders in the Netherlands. The event attracted representatives from a wide range of organisations with a substantial EMEA and international presence, including Netflix, Uber, NATO, Philips, Boskalis and Teva Pharmaceuticals, to network and discuss the key challenges they face in rapidly changing markets.

The evening was hosted by TALiNT Partners Managing Director Ken Brotherston and TALiNT Employer Programme Director Debra Sparshott, alongside Maxine Pillinger, Regional Managing Director EMEA; Jamie Pirie, Head of Sales; and Emiel van Broekhoven, Regional Operations Director EMEA, representing global total workforce solutions firm AMS, formerly known as Alexander Mann Solutions.

Participants included a wide range of HR and Talent Acquisition leaders from a broad range of sectors; including consumer goods, technology, care services, engineering and defence. Scale up, scale down, what next?

Improving operational agility and flexibility was cited as a top priority for 56% of more than 3,000 CEOs and senior public sector leaders in a recent IBM Institute for Business Value research project.

The experience of European talent leaders at the roundtable demonstrated this lesson had been hard won, with numerous accounts of having to rapidly upscale and descale high volume hiring as a result of Covid-19. The massive operational disruption and the subsequent stop-start nature of recruitment in 2020 had given way to continued uncertainty in 2021, even as demand for products and services bounced back. The increased focus on cost-saving posed an additional challenge – is it possible to hire with more agility and efficiency, while simultaneously maintaining quality and keeping costs down?

Agility for HR and talent acquisition teams has three fundamental aspects, according to Maxine Pillinger, Regional MD EMEA for AMS. “It’s making sure that your organisation can get to talent quickly, it’s the cost of lost opportunity if you do not get the right talent into your



Dawn Gibson
Features and News
Editor
TALiNT Partners



Ken Brotherston
Managing Director
TALiNT Partners

organisation at the right time, and it’s speed to competency,” she said. “That agility can be enhanced by talent acquisition and management as organisations become more digital, driving efficiency, higher candidate experience, and enhanced hiring manager experience.”

A more integrated approach

As Covid-19 has prompted HR and talent acquisition teams to work closely together, many organisations are considering a more integrated approach to hiring.

Maarten Hansson, Head of Workforce Strategy for Philips, explained how the company had embarked on a ‘total workforce for strategy journey’ three years ago, encompassing full-time and contingent workers and considering drivers such as skill set, location strategy and automation. “Dependent on the workforce demands and the characteristics we determine: What is the best solution to fulfil that need?” he said. “When it comes to agility and Covid, this is the moment when HR is really able to make a huge impact because workforce for all companies is one of the biggest costs and one of the biggest decisive factors for success. So, we have a great opportunity to look more integrally at that workforce, mix and location to drive that.”

Effective internal mobility

Some companies have become more agile because the pandemic has encouraged flexibility – suddenly, old rules are no longer seen as written in stone. However, this of course depends on the nature of your operation; while Netflix, for example, embedded agility in its company culture well before Covid-19, government organisations and stringently regulated industries such as health and pharmaceuticals do not have the same scope to pivot quickly or bend the rules.

However, regardless of core business, talent leaders strongly agreed that a key part of agility is successfully leveraging internal mobility.

“Very quickly you realise you can’t hire your way to success anymore, so how do you really utilise the internal employees that you have?” queried



Rohit Joshi, Group Head – Talent Acquisition and Identification for the Coca Cola Hellenic Bottling Company. “The whole talent marketplace initiative is extremely big for us. We have been trying out ideas this year with transferable skills and projects, and we’re going to be investing quite a bit in this in the coming two to three years.”

Elif Tuncer, Talent Director for global lighting group Signify, said they had a successful long-term track record for internal hiring, but it was still a struggle sometimes to release talent from one place to another within the organisation. “We share the same challenge of upskilling and reskilling and how to do it in a more agile way,” she said. “If we bring in that perspective of skills, it is even more of a challenge for hiring managers, but that’s the transition that we need to have.”

Other top priorities for talent leaders include creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce and technology investment, specifically digitisation, AI, robotics and automation.

What is the new model?

We have entered a crucial transition phase for the new way of working, but many organisations are still figuring out how they will adjust their attraction strategies and EVPs. While it is unlikely nine-to-five office culture will remain the norm, what will take its place is a work in progress: will we be largely working remotely or is a hybrid model more productive?

Some CEOs are concerned that a permanent shift to remote working will stifle innovation and collaboration; others are convinced that the last year has proven that business as usual can continue without the need to set foot in an office.

Candidate preference is another factor. “What we see now is that new people looking to join

the company are all for hybrid,” remarked one of the guests. “If we tell people we want them to move to the Netherlands and be on campus every single day, they’re not that interested anymore. It seems that there has been a big mind shift.”

There has also been a big mind shift regarding whether it is necessary to relocate talent internationally, underlined by the disruption caused to widely dispersed global teams when Covid-19 struck. Tapping into local talent could be a less risky, more cost-efficient solution.

Looking forward

There are a plethora of challenges facing the talent sector in 2021, and no definitive answers. However, organisations able to enhance agility through internal mobility, digitalisation and integrated workforce strategies will have a sturdy foundation to differentiate themselves as an employer of choice in a swiftly evolving labour market.

“You can’t hire your way to success anymore, so how do you really utilise the internal employees that you have?”

Rohit Joshi, Group Head – Talent Acquisition and Identification, Coca Cola Hellenic Bottling Company



Ken Brotherston
Managing Director
TALiNT Partners

 ken@talint.co.uk
 07770 400300



Jamie Pirie
Head of Sales
AMS

 jamie.pirie@weareams.com
 07795 571709

