



Employee Engagement

Mini-whitepaper series

Making Talent Retention Job #1

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Introduction

To quote an old Bob Dylan song - The times they are a changin'. Our business world has evolved a lot since I first joined the workforce in 1977. Change has certainly been a constant during all those years since, but I don't remember a time when the multi-generational differences were so complex, and, the associated impacts on employee recruiting and retention so substantial. The Silent gen, Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y (millennials), Gen Z – each generation living with a different world situation, politics, wars, and socioeconomics. As our population ages, the make-up of the workforce is changing accordingly. Millennials in particular already make up more than a third of the workforce and will grow to more than half over the next 5 years. And as has been the case with every new generation, millennials have a different set of expectations to meet in the workplace and companies are challenged with how to adapt to this workforce of the future. We would expect more change with the gen Z workforce that follows.

The impact to every business when it comes to finding and retaining talent is undeniable and more challenging than ever. Traditional HR approaches alone are no longer enough. At this time, given the workforce situation compounded with a tight labor market, businesses are very focused on finding creative new approaches to the problem.

The management theory behind Employee Engagement (EE) started in the 90s but did not see widespread traction in business till the 2000s and many EE programs would either confuse or intermix the theory and practice of EE with employee or job satisfaction programs, employee morale campaigns and the like. But EE is once again talked about more than ever and seeing new efforts to rethink how EE was once conceived.

This mini-whitepaper series is dedicated to this important topic and intended to accomplish two important objectives: 1) share new techniques being developed by the RMI to help the industry conceive new ways of engaging employees to improve employee satisfaction and retention, and making it easier for employees to engage with their employers 2) Highlight specific opportunities for collaboration of the HR function with Delivery teams to address what we will highlight as cross-functional solutions. Key to these new EE solutions will be how do we do this at scale!

Context for Understanding What Must Change

Leading up to writing this series, I interacted with dozens of business leaders from around the globe to gain as much perspective as I could, and married that input with what our institute has been doing in research for resource management related to this business of employee retention

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and morale. As with solving any business problem, understanding the drivers of why employees leave a particular position is certainly necessary to crafting a solution. While there is certainly no 'universal' solution to this issue as every individual has a different situation including their particular career wants and desires, I concluded there are two primary drivers which continue to stand out as important to address particularly as it relates to millennials (but not limited to them):

1. The kind of work I do every day, my enjoyment of that kind of work, and a sense that that work is aligned with my career aspirations and goals is fundamental to how 'engaged' I am with the company I work for.
2. A shared sense of purpose and the feeling I am doing something important, not just for me or my company, but for the broader good is also part of what makes me want to be 'engaged'.

Important to note there are certainly other drivers such as compensation, the work environment, the relationship with my immediate manager and more. But our studies in this area put these two 'conclusions or key drivers of dis-engagement' at the top of our list.

When reflecting on conclusion #1, I was thinking 'huh' that's no different than what has always motivated me. Doing the kind of work that I love and enjoy has always been important to me and became more so as I got older (with money becoming no longer my primary driver). As an institute focused on best practices in how we manage resources including how we allocate people to work in a project-based company, I know the emphasis for most companies has historically been on doing this efficiently. Efficiency based algorithms for project allocations typically do not take into account employee satisfaction more often than not leaving that dimension to more traditional HR approaches. Most managers I spoke to in my research said they 'did their best' to align career desires with project assignments, but business pressures more often than not took precedence. Sound familiar?

Regarding the second conclusion, I must admit when I finished college, I was broke and just needed a good steady job – having a sense of purpose in my job was more like icing on the cake. And when I was young, the technology and ability to reach a worldwide audience easily and cost effectively simply did not exist so I really was not thinking more broadly than me, my family and the company that was paying me. Today's societal safety nets did not largely exist for the boomer generation and have changed the choices available to today's younger workforce. Growing up with parents from the Silent generation I also heard often and loudly how my generation 'had it made'. Generational change is nothing new – how we adapt and manage to it is what matters.

I recently read a LinkedIn post from a young professional in the tech space who left a job for greener pastures and in that post described why they were leaving. The post was an attempt to

bring awareness to the gap which undeniably exists between many of today's employers and millennials. This young professional had many things to offer as advice for employers of millennials, but one key point permeated all I read and it was this – “as millennials we were raised and taught that we were the generation that could change the world!” A clear sense of common purpose leading to (even in a small way) changing the world was very important. The post went on to explain that too many employers were focused on all the wrong things using examples of company provided game rooms and free snacks, while remaining overly tolerant of underperforming millennial peers who seem to get equal treatment for unequal performance. This was not the first time I have heard similar rationale, but never before stated so clearly and directly.

Interestingly, for this author as a boomer, I was really on the same page as this young professional was – never been a fan of game rooms for employees and over accommodation of poor performers. Maybe there is not so much difference between boomers and millennials after all? Are we really focused on the right things when it comes to employee retention? When it comes to believing if what I am doing can help change the world, our ability for millennials to communicate broadly and reach a worldwide audience with new and innovative ideas that could change the world is more possible than ever. Regarding conclusion #2, the RMI is not a think tank for leadership development. Our focus is on best practice in RM and workforce management. My two cents on this topic are that every company should review how it connects with millennials to make clear how their company does in some way contribute to the broader good, and how each person's contribution helps achieve that goal.

With the rapidly growing millennial population, emerging growth of Gen Zers, and the decline of boomers in the workforce, employers had better figure out how to address these two important drivers of employee attrition – fast! Making retention job #1 will be top of the priority list for most if not all people centric services teams.

The Landscape of Resource Management (RM) and Human Resource Management (HR)

As RM processes have improved over the past dozen years or so, the path to better connecting people to not only work that needs to be done, but work that also meets their personal objectives has become clearer, and with the advance of better software to support project-based work teams, more achievable too.

The role of traditional HR is and has certainly evolved over the past four decades, and HR organizations around the globe are tackling this important issue of improving EE. What is changing at the same time is the accelerating interjection of disciplined Resource Management (RM) processes and support. RM fundamentally started out focused on the matching of supply and demand for project-based work where human capital is essential to success. The Just-in-

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Time Resourcing® solution taught as part of the RMI's Resource Management Certified Professional (RMCP)® addresses how to incorporate elements of EE into traditional supply and demand processes, particularly where the allocation of people to projects is concerned, and do so in a scalable fashion. This overlap of purpose (EE) by teams owning the Delivery mission and the HR functions which support them, has caused some (perceived) collision of roles in many cases, usually though unfounded in reality.

This picture depicts what the RMI believes how typical RM and HR functions (might) co-exist including their mutual mission of improving EE.

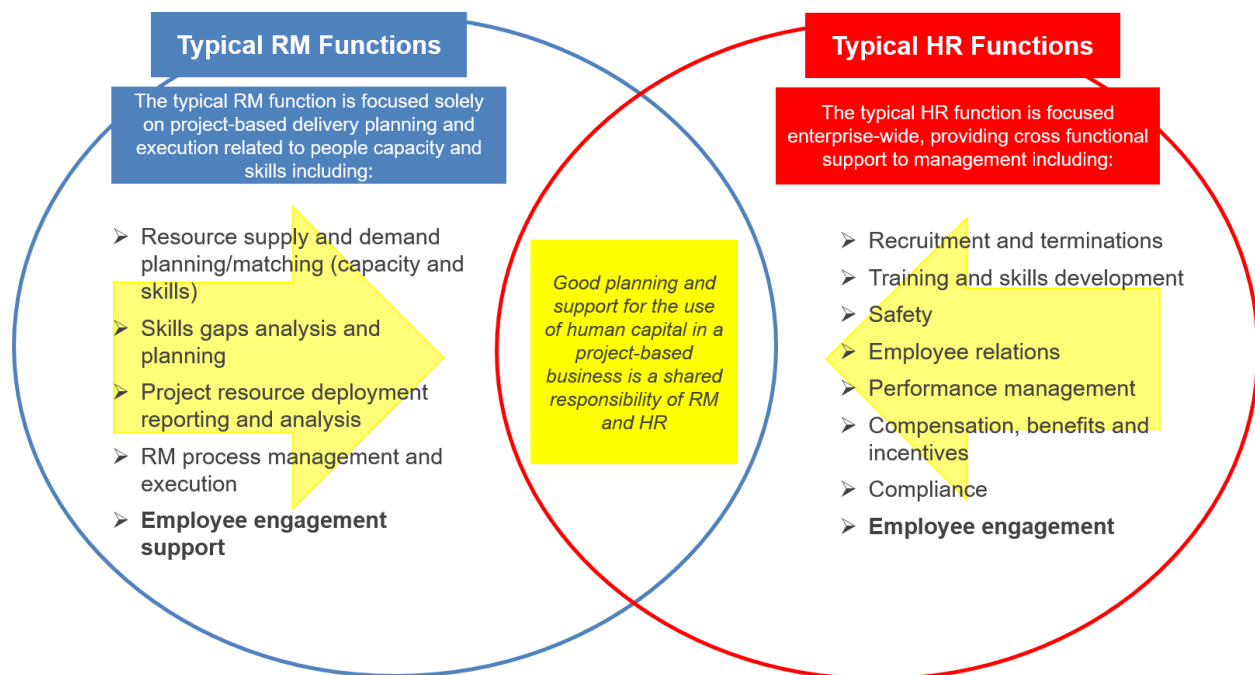


Figure 1 – Relationship and roles of RM and HR functions¹

The remainder of this mini-whitepaper series is focused on the first conclusion I presented earlier and some thoughts on what we can do to better engage employees and enabling them to better engage with us. In Part 2 of this series, I will discuss how to enable a more engaged

¹ From the RMI RMCP® toolkit.

employee culture via new RM processes, and collaboration opportunities for Delivery teams and the HR organizations which support them.

About the Author

With 40+ years of IT experiences including 18 years with IBM serving IT departments around the globe, Randy Mysliviec now leads RTM Consulting and the Resource Management Institute. Acknowledged by industry sources as an expert in Global Resource Management (GRM) and author of the Just-in-Time Resourcing® brand of solutions, Randy advises multi-national companies with the complex challenge of operating IT services teams serving the global market. He is a founding member of the Technology Professional Services Association (TPSA – now TSIA - the Technology Services Industry Association) and served as a member of the TPSA Advisory Board.

About the Resource Management Institute (RMI)

The Resource Management Institute is dedicated to the advancement of resource and workforce management thought leadership, best practices and standards, globally recognized credentials that certify resource management expertise, and tools and resources necessary for effective and efficient management of human capital-intensive businesses. The Resource Management Institute was created to provide the resource and workforce management community a vehicle to advance the discipline of resource and workforce management, and further the interests of the people who make up this community and the companies they work for. Visit us at www.resourcemanagementinstitute.com and on [LinkedIn](#).

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